2: Lévi-Strauss E-5 (1938-1939)1948
SP17 Nambicuara SP17



particular form of their own. Death is identified with these spirits. Men's souls are believed to be reincarnated as jaguars, whereas women's and children's souls are taken away by wind and thunder, never to return.

The highest being is the Thunder, with which any man, though usually a shaman, may have personal contact through revelations and visions. Women, however, except when very old, and children are deprived of these privileges. Women are also forbidden, under pain of death, to see the sacred flageolets (see Musical Instruments, p. 368) played at the ceremonies marking the beginning and the end of the dry season.

### SHAMANISM AND MEDICINE

The shaman is sometimes distinct from—but more frequently identified with—the political chief. He is distinguished by having the privilege of polygyny, playing the leading role in ceremonial life, and possessing special supernatural powers. He treats patients by sucking out the disease or by fighting it with small ritual arrows called "thunder-arrows."

In addition to magical cures, the *Nambicuara* treat sickness with numerous medicinal plants, which are used externally or internally according to the disease. For eye infection, which is very frequent, they apply the infusion of a special bark with the help of a container made of leaves.

### FOLKLORE, LORE, AND LEARNING

The only legend recorded by Lévi-Strauss (n.d. b) is a flood tale relating the destruction of human life and its re-creation through several incestuous marriages between the offspring of an old woman, who was the only being who escaped the disaster.

The only basic numbers used for counting are one and two, but the natives can reckon higher figures by combining these.

Colors are classified differently according to the dialects. The *Eastern, Central, Southern,* and *Western Nambicuara* agree in putting yellow and green in the same category, whereas the *Northern* group identify red and yellow, and class green, blue, and black together.

Some *Nambicuara* groups call stars by the same name which designates the spirits. The year is divided into two seasons and an undetermined number of lunar months. The day includes six main stages, each based on the position of the sun. Space is divided into two sections that are perpendicular to each other, one corresponding to the apparent movement of the sun and the other to the direction of the main waterways.

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4: Oberg E-5 (1949)1953
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113 ALBISETTI, P. CESAR. *See* COLBACCHINI, P. ANTONIO.

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[p. 136 (8)]

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[p. 136 (c)]

145 It seemed to me that these people get their full set of teeth much earlier.

Those molars which are popularly called wisdom teeth, and which are tending to disappear in the white race, are no mere ornaments among the Indians. They are endowed with significant size and function.

264 I believe that the excessive amount of work required of their
145 digestive system is reflected in these dental characteristics. The large molars appear earlier because they are needed for frequent and powerful mastication.

262 They always eat of everything, without discrimination or restraint. To my knowledge, there is no animal they will not eat. They discard only the intestinal tract of the game they kill.

[194] The Indians of the Juruena River consume more meat than the
[514] others; those from José Bonifácio eat more manioc and maize. Their intestinal gas makes their company unpleasant. They all have furred
164 tongues, and many have gums affected by alveolar piorrhea. Their teeth, contrary to frequent cases among the Sambaqui skulls, do not suffer from the state of wear which Lund described in 1842 for Lagoa Santa man; but they suffer from caries which do not spare the crowns.

A special skin disease prevails among the Indians of the Serra do Norte. (1)

[113]

1. See E. Roquette-Pinto, Lectures at the Biblioteca Nacional [National Library] on March 15, 1913, and at the Sociedade Brasileira de Dermatologia, Policlinica Geral do Rio de Janeiro [Brazilian Dermatological Society, Main Polyclinic of Rio de Janeiro], on June 11, 1912.

[181] Actually, some officials of the Rondon Commission had noticed the characteristic scabs of the disease. Owing perhaps to a lack of typical cases such as I witnessed, however, they took the spots
[513] to be mere skin exfoliations caused by the friction of the body on the ground, where the Serra do Norte Indians sleep.

164 These papery scales cannot be removed easily; I noticed that they did not come off when the woman scratched herself. I believe that the itching is much less severe at this time; it seemed more intense during the initial stages.

I cannot be definite about the time span of the disease. The symptoms evolve in a few days from the first to the second stage, but the latter seems quite prolonged.

[183] Some of the scabs contain incipient papery scales. However, as I had the opportunity to see only one woman and one girl, her daughter, whose bodies were entirely covered with the lesions of the last stage, I believe that the disease does not always reach this point. It may remain stationary at the second stage, or it may recede [involuir].

For the time being, therefore, I ascribe three stages to the disease:

(a) the cyst stage
(b) the scab stage
(c) the scale stage

I believe that these correspond to evolutionary phases of the same disease, and not to different diseases, because I found transitional forms on some of the affected individuals.

Besides, [the Indians] indicated by means of very clear signs that the final symptoms began with the cyst stage, the only one found in nursing children.

[757] The Indians spread saliva on the scabs; we do not know yet [278] whether they use any herb against the disease. They probably do, for veritable herbariums were found in their villages.

302 751 Another question that remains to be solved is the possible effect on the disease of the Indians' custom of painting their body with a greasy paste made from the juice of the urucu seeds. (1)

[113]

1. Alvaro Osorio de Almeida (in the Boletim do Museu Nacional, Vol. 7, 1931, No. 1) studies the reactions of skin painted with urucu to the actinic rays of light and to solar heat. His experiments led him to the following conclusions:

"Once smeared with urucu, the

164 secretly mix the scales from their skin with the food and water of their
114 neighbors so that the disease may affect them too.

He adds that no hair grows on the white spots. The itching is always intensive.

In 1909, Koch-Grünberg wrote of the purupuru found in the valley of the Rio Negro. In accordance with the Indians' views he distinguished three varieties of the disease, white, black, and red, depending on the predominant coloring of the spots. Koch-Grünberg says that the black spots are hard and coarse, the white ones smooth and similar in aspect to burns.

However, Oswaldo Cruz (1) stated in 1913 that there is no

●[113]

1. Oswaldo Cruz, Relatorio sobre as condições medico-sanitarias do vale do Amazonas [Report on the Medical and Sanitary Conditions of the Amazon Valley], Ministry of Agriculture (Rio, 1913).

justification for this division into three varieties. He considers the white spots to constitute a more advanced stage of the disease and to result from the elimination of skin pigment by an infectious agent.

Oswaldo Cruz also noted scaling around the black spots.

[113] Already in 1886, Hirsch (2) had stated that purupuru could only

2. A. Hirsch, Handbuch der historisch-geographischen Pathologie [Handbook of Historical and Geographical Pathology] (1886).

be a dermatomycosis. The studies of Montoya y Flores (3) and

[113]

3. J. B. Montoya y Flores, "Recherches sur les Caratés de Colombie [Studies on the Carate of Colombia]" (Paris, 1893); Archives de Parasitologie, Vol. 2; "Notes sur les Caratés" [Notes on the Carate], Ann. de Derm. et de Syphil. (1897).

164 Thus the true likeness between the two diseases only appears clearly in the last stage, when the elongated papery scales cover the whole body.

On the other hand, the symptomatology of the Serra do Norte disease bears no similarity to that of the Araguaia River tokelau which was described in 1903 by Dr. C. Paes Leme (1) and which Fritz Krause

● [113]

1. C. Paes Leme, "Contribuição ao estudo do Tokelau [Contribution to the Study of Tokelau]," Doctoral Thesis (Rio, 1903).

failed to mention. The general symptoms reported [by Leme] are altogether lacking among the Serra do Norte Indians, whose ailment bears all the characteristics of a local disease.

For these reasons, I believe that báanêcêdútú is an exfoliating dermatomycosis, perhaps even a tinea akin to tokelau.

At that time it proved impossible to obtain materials for microscopic examinations. At present the situation is more favorable; the sick are becoming more trustful, and this makes it possible to carry out much more complex investigations.

I have examined [ornamental] bands and other objects which had long been in direct contact with the skin lesions. It is obvious that such observations are quite rudimentary, and I do not expect them to be successful. Should it prove possible to isolate a fungus from these objects, to cultivate it and innoculate it, I shall return to this interesting subject.

It is the task of specialists to complete and correct these notes, which merely attempt to record the clinical [190] aspects of a pathological manifestation found among some primitive Indians. Sooner or later, contaminated by alien infections which unfortunately they will be unable to avoid, they will exhibit similar disturbances in a different form, modified by the benefits and evils of civilization. (1)

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1. See Olympio da Fonseca Filho, "Afinidades parasitologicas e clinicas

● 113

entre o tokelau da Asia e da Oceania e o chimberê dos indigenas de Mato-Grosso [Parasitological and Clinical Affinities between the Tokelau of Asia and Oceania and the Chimberê of Mato Grosso Aborigines]," Boletim do Museu Nacional, Vol. 6 (1930) No. 2.

[Pp. 191 through 210 omitted because they do not pertain to the Nambicuara.]

144 142 [211] If we compare the Serra do Norte Indians with other Brazilian aboriginal types, the following similarities and differences become apparent and worthy of note:

Skin: Their skin coloring places them alongside the Bororo and Caraja. (1) The southern group comprises the darkest Indians in Brazil.

[113]

1. The following data from Paul Ehrenreich's Estudos antropologicos sobre os Primitivos Habitantes do Brasil [Anthropological Studies on the Primitive Inhabitants of Brazil] (1897) were cited earlier by the author: "The skin color of the Paressi and Bororo is considerably darker and even more reddish [than that of other groups cited], being comparable to the tone of terra cotta (Broca Scale 30, 32, 44). The Caraja are the darkest on the exposed areas of the body." (Ed.)

141 144 Hair: The average index found in cross-section was about 59, very close to that of the Semang (Negritoes) of the Malayan Peninsula. Very intense pigmentation, thick medulla; circular section. [Fig. 15]

Stature: Twenty-five percent [of the Serra do Norte Indians] are less than 1.60 meters in height, 56 percent from 1.60 to 1.65 meters, and 19 percent from 1.65 to 1.70.

824 It is a curious fact that palm cabbage (palmito) is not utilized by the Serra do Norte Indians. Gabriel Soares [234] made it clear in 1587 that the aborigines of the coast prized the leaf buds of the palm tree: "Stupendous palm cabbages, five or six spans in length and as thick as a man's leg, are extracted from the buds of these palms."

273 Pineapple wine was a common beverage, for Soares goes on to say: "The nature of this fruit is hot and humid, and it is very harmful [278] to those with open wounds or sores; the same pineapples, when green [757] are good for curing sores, for their juice eats away all the rotten and putrid flesh, and the aborigines know this; in such wise does this fruit [296] eat away, that they use its rind to wipe off the rust from their swords and knives and to remove the stains from the clothes they wash; when ripe, the juice is used by the Indians to make a wine which inebriates them; to this end they pluck the fruit not quite ripe, on account of its being more sour..."

263 The Indians of the Serra do Norte found our salted food unpleasant. They often refused the plates we set before them, giving us to understand that it was the salty flavor which led them to behave in this manner.

262 Milk (condensed milk) was also rejected in the beginning; they would make a face and say that it was human milk and therefore repulsive: [235] "Anungçú!"

261 One must know the Indians' gluttony, their insatiable hunger, their continual, unfailing, artless, persistent animus devorandi, fully to comprehend the disgust which led them to such a renunciation.

262 The children are given to eat of everything; no matter what 855 goes into an Indian's mouth, there is always a crumb for the little one who walks beside him or rests in his arms.

276 Even the stimulants they use--tobacco, for instance--are shared 855 with the children. More than once I had the opportunity to observe Indians giving cigarettes to children under two. (1)

● [113]

1. Cf. E. Roquette-Pinto, "A condição da criança entre os Indios do Brasil [The Status of the Child Among the Indians of Brazil," Primeiro Congresso Americano da Criança [First American Congress on Childhood] (Tucumán, 1916).

752 They spread saliva on bâanêcedûtû sores with the palm of the hand. They squeeze insect bites between two fingers.

757 Those suffering from fever go quietly into a corner, when they do not leap into running water. They eat nothing as long as the seizure lasts.

In the village on the Juina River there was an old Indian of about sixty. He was sad and prostrate and was not cheered by our gifts. He would put his hands to his head to show that it was aching. A lad who seemed [251] to be his son judging by the extreme affection he bestowed on the old man, contrary to the other Indians, kept offering him honey with water. Each time the old man would turn away. In the afternoon, his condition not having improved, he called the boy and said something to him.

The lad grasped the man's head in his hands and put his mouth against the nostrils, sucking hard. It seems that this suction which he repeated later was helpful, for the old man became more expansive.

[Fig. 41]

853 Childbirth must be easy, considering how poorly the foetus is nourished. The Indian women, when they do not have sufficient milk, take a drought of water in their mouth and put their lips onto those of the baby, transferring the liquid in a nourishing kiss.

844 I wanted to know how they cut the umbilical cord and showed several Indians who were more outgoing and intelligent--Damasceno, Nuleke, Krikriceknerá--a drawing in a book that showed a foetus with its attachments. From Damasceno's replies I understood that the mother cuts the cord with her teeth and hides the placenta under some leaves.

This piece of information obviously remains subject to revision.

531 Drawings by the Indians of the Serra do Norte, though rudimentary, reveal some interesting motifs emancipated from animal forms.

The circle, triangle and square are drawn in black on the surface of some gourds.

[532] [252] Snakes and saurians are sometimes drawn sketchily(1)

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1. See E. Roquette-Pinto, "Documentos para o estudo da psicologia dos Indios do

7:Roquette-Pinto--42 E-4, 5 (no date)1938 SP17 Nambicuara SP17 (ca. 1912)

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Brasil [Materials for the Study of Brazilian Indian Psychology]," Arquivos Brasileiros de Psiquiatria, Neurologia e Medicina Legal (Rio de Janeiro, 1917).

237 301 Featherwork is scarce and in fact insignificant. One of the illustrations in this book [p. (60B)] shows an interesting feather diadem patterned after an object of similar type but of admirable craftsmanship which the Indians purloined from their neighbors to the west and which is also to be found in the [National] Museum. (2) [Fig. 42]

2. Semicircular straw head ornaments are to be found mainly in the state of Amazonas as well as among the Huari of the Guaporé River, who resemble the Nambicuara in their primitive axes, their circular houses, etc. (Cf. Nordenskjöld, "The Ethnography of South America Seen from Mojos in Bolivia." [Engl.]).

The use of cotton has given an extraordinary boost to the development of featherwork among the Tupian Indians, as I demonstrated with the gorgeous ornaments made by the Urubu Indians (Gurupi River). The Nambicuara are familiar with cotton, but have not even developed featherwork based on plaiting or netting; this seems to attest to a tradition poor in such textile techniques. The Guayaki, who are Tupian Indians of rudimentary culture, according to Vellard, have neither featherwork nor agriculture. (R. L.)

535 We were able to observe two types of dances: a war dance which we recorded in a film shown at the National Library [of Rio de Janeiro] on March 15, 1913, and in which Indians of the Cocozu,

194 The consonants are b, c, d, g, h, k, l, m, n, r, s, t, z; h is always strongly aspirated, like German ch.

F, j, v, and x are lacking.

The following consonant clusters are characteristic: an, kr, tch, dn, gn, tg, tn, kd, kz, kt, nt, nz, tz, td, nç, tç, tzũ, gç, gd, ndz, nk.

193 Those words designating parts of the human body have the same root in all Nambicuara dialects, slightly modified in one case or another: uá or toá.

[263]

| | Cocozu | Tagnani | Tawite | Anunze |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arm | Oá-nukicú | Uá-nokrí | Toá-rabatndê | Uá-nukizê |
| Mouth | Toá-iuçú | Uá-iurí | Tá-iuirí | Uá-iuarê |
| Tongue | Toáio-herú | Uái-hêndê | Táiu-hendú | Uáile-herú |

Here the particle toa (uá, oá) has the same possessive value as the nu particle of Arawakan languages; it is found only in words pertaining to parts of the human body. (1)

[113]

1. See E. Roquette-Pinto, "The Indians of Serra do Norte," [Engl.] Proceedings of the Second Pan-American Scientific Congress (Washington, 1917).

[Fig. 50]

Nearly all Cocozu words end in zu or çu, used interchangeably. Anunze words often end in zê. But this last sound, to be pronounced properly, must be approximated to gê. (2) In the Tawite dialect and

2. This may be a linguistic trait of Ge parentage. (H. A. T.)

/are common.

in the several Tagnani dialects, endings in di, tê, rê, and ri (soft r)

197 193 One particle found rather frequently in these dialects deserves special mention, owing to its importance for the [264] evaluation of

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197 These traits alone would be sufficient to set the Nambicuara language apart from the Nu-Arawakan dialects.

But beyond this, it is easy to verify the dissimilarity between the lexicons [of these two groups]. Compare the Paressi vocabulary, an excellent representative of the Nu-Arawakan family, with the word lists of the Serra do Norte Indians. They are completely different.

We would search in vain through South America for a language possessing any deep affinities with the Nambicuara dialects.

[Fig. 52]

It is true, however, that the language of the Xingu River Suya bears a certain resemblance to the dialects of the Serra do Norte. The possessive particle woa of the Suya, which is clearly found among the Nambicuara in the form of either ua or toa, constitutes the best argument in favor of this relationship.

In view of this characteristic, therefore--and it is a significant one for it has served as a basis for the modern classification of our tribes--[266] wherever the Suya are placed the Nambicuara should also be included. (1)

● [113]

1. In "Beitrage zur Ethnographie des Araguaya-Xingú Gebietes [Contribution to the Ethnography of the Araguaia-Xingo District]," Proceedings of the XXI International Congress of Americanists (Göteborg, 1924), Fritz Krause confirmed this linguistic affinity and attempted to make it even closer by citing additional words akin not only to Caraja but also to Ge dialects.

As to cultural aspects, it becomes obvious, especially in view of Nordenskjöld's comparative ethnographic studies, that the Nambicuara as well as the Caraja have been influenced by sub-Andean cultures.

The Caraja show signs of being partially subjected to this influence at the time when

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278 Numerous travelers and physiologists have concerned themselves with curare without succeeding in exactly determining its nature and its method of preparation. For some curare is purely vegetable; for others it appears to be composed largely of animal materials. Without analyzing here all the literature on this subject, it will be enough to recall that most former authors and travelers of the past century name diverse species of Strychnos as the principal base of curare; many other plants belonging to various families have also been mentioned as possibly entering in this poison. The partisans of an animal or mixed origin for curare, practically all travelers, assert that the venoms of snakes, batrachians, and arachnids, and fish and insect extracts, etc... play an essential role in its preparation. Despite numerous opinions to the contrary the presence at least of certain venoms in some curares (1) is indisputable.

[113]

1. Vellard and Assis, "Études immunologiques sur le curare /Immunological Studies on Curare/," Annales de l'Institut Pasteur. Paris, LII, 102, 1934.

Often these controversies on the composition of curare have lost sight of one essential fact. Curare is not a set substance and does not correspond to one single formula. There is not one but a number of curares, more or less complex, peculiar to each region, each tribe, and in many cases to each preparer.

Besides it is the general but false practice to call every paralyzing arrow poison of South America curare. The application of this term should be limited, in accordance with its classical physiological definition, to any poison suppressing the passage of excitations of the nerve to the muscle while preserving direct excitability of the muscle and that of the motor nerve.